



Over the last number of weeks we have been talking about caring for our neighbours, our community and our city. It struck me (maybe because Phil Yntema is coming next week to speak about how to care for our personal finances or because the Elder Board and Finance Committee have begun thinking about next year's budget), that one of the necessary ingredients in making a difference in our world is the fact that it will take money. Scripture makes it clear, from the beginning to the end that God intends to meddle with our finances. Why? Because He knows that money is needed to get some things done but more importantly, because He knows that there is a correlation between being financially involved in God's work and connecting our heart to God. Simply put: if God has our finances, He has our heart. The more we trust Him with our finances, the more we can trust Him with our lives.

The Bible goes on to make some strange claims regarding money. For example, in Acts 20:35 Jesus says, "*It is more blessed to give than receive.*" That sounds completely crazy but we know from experience it is true. Most of us have experienced it when we find ourselves sitting around a Christmas tree more excited about how our kids will react to the presents we gave them than getting a gift ourselves. Or more excited about the making a difference on your short-term mission trip than taking that same money for a holiday ourselves. You see, God says it is in the giving that we get some of our greatest joys in life. The other day I read a scientific paper that says that there is something in our psychological DNA as a person that is placed there which causes us to have great joy when we give. I think it was God who placed that in our DNA. So, today let me share a few ideas about what God says about giving and then we will interview a man who has given his life to care for others.

I. We are not called to give to Needs, we are called to give to God.

I think it is important to talk about God's strategic plan concerning money because often churches have talked about money when there is a crisis situation or in the context of some appeal. I remember a few years ago a speaker came and talked about the needs of children in India and the result was that individuals within this church decided to support over 150 children. Many of us are still supporting those children and feel blessed to be caring for them. But, if we are honest, we have been conditioned to think that giving is really about responding to needs which are placed in front of us rather than understanding that God's real call is to be faithful in an ongoing week-by-week pattern of placing of our finances in the hands of God.

I Corinthians 16:1,2 says, "*Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.*" While at times God will want us to give to a specific need, we must to understand that His desire is to see us involved in the ongoing faithful giving of a portion of our resources to Him. Why? Because the key issue of giving is not the meeting of a specific need but rather, the giving of our heart and life to Him.

Many of you will remember that when we had our 'Financial Campaign' around raising money for the building program that we were very specific about one thing. While the building was the impetus around which we were talking about giving, the real issue was that we as individuals needed to ask God what we should do and then in

faithfulness before Him do what He told us to do. I say this because we live in a world full of needs, the requests coming our way never stop. We hear them on the religious shows, radio stations and have people come knocking on our door. So it is so hard to know when and how much we are called to give. However, I believe that only God knows which needs He wants us (and needs us) as individuals and a Church to connect with, in order to make an eternal difference. He is the one who knows which area of our city and world are 'white unto harvest.' Only He knows those places which need that little push before a flood of results for His kingdom will happen. Only He knows who has been praying for a miracle which our finances can release. So our call must be, when we hear a request, to go to the God and ask Him what we should do. The issue is not should we give but are we giving to those things where God is moving and needs us to places our resources so they will make the greatest difference.

II. God owns all the Wealth. He intends for his Wealth to be Circulated.

This is one of those teachings in scripture that seems hard to understand. But, the teaching is clear. Even though God owns everything, (Psalm 50:10, *"For every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills."*), God can not spend His silver and gold unless we give it back to Him. Once He gives it to us He won't snatch it out of our hands. That means that when we get wealth, we can choose to spend it all on ourselves (hoard it) or we can give it away and make a difference with it. But, if we hoard it then God can't use it. In other words, money isn't worth anything unless you spend it.

That is the story of the buried talents in scripture. The passage in Matthew 25:14 – 30 begins by saying, *"It will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them."* Jesus has traveled to heaven and until He returns, He has placed time, talents, His wealth and His property in our hands. Some people took what God gave them and buried that treasure (kept it for themselves) the passage says. But others took that money and through their jobs and smart business practices grew that amount of money and gave even more back to the Lord.

The other day I talked to a man who said he and his business partners made a promise to the Lord to give a specific amount of money to a number of ministries. And despite the setback they have experienced due the economic situation, their goal (the reason for their company) is to work hard so they can meet those commitments to the Lord. They are working hard to keep God's money in ministry circulation.

God wants us to give it back to him so He can bless it, multiply it and use over and over again. His goal, (if we will let Him), is to cycle His wealth over and over again, so that multitudes of people's lives will be changed. And here is the amazing part, God's promise is that as we see ourselves as part of that process of keeping His money in circulation, He promises to care for our needs and bless us.

Luke 6:38, *"Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."* Notice there are three promises to this verse:

(1) We are called to Give.

Do you know that this is a command? Why? Because God has the right to command us to give, because it is His in the first place. While Kathy and my names may be on the mortgage at 215 Scenic Way NW, if I read the fine print, it really is the property of the bank until I am 64. But if I look at the real fine print, unless God gives

me the strength to work and the wisdom to keep my job as well as the air I breathe and He is gracious enough to keep my heart beating, I will have nothing but a 3' x 6' hole in the ground (actually it will have me in it). What we own has been given as a gift and therefore when the real owner asks me to keep His money circulating, it only seems fair and wise to listen to Him.

(2) There is a promise: If you Give you will Receive.

I Timothy 6:17 – 19, *“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.”*

Notice that we are called to not put our trust in our wealth which is uncertain. (Have you checked the Stock Market numbers lately?) Notice that there will be a final accounting in eternity for how we spent our money. When we arrive in heaven, God will look around to see if we have laid up treasure (eternal RRSPs) in heaven. Notice it says, *“Put your hope in God who richly provides for us and provides everything for our enjoyment,”* so we can lay hold of life that is truly life. There is His promised care and His promise to give us life that is truly worth living. If we give, He promises that we will never out-give the Lord.

(3) With the Measure you use it will be measured to you.

Jesus is basically saying that He will use the same scoop shovel that we use as we give our finances back to Him to scoop blessings back into our lives. So if you use a little scoop don't expect to get a lot back. God is saying, be generous so I can be generous back to you.

II Corinthians 9:6,7, *“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”*

Maybe because of my background, I have to work hard to trust God on this promise and that is why I think God placed Malachi 3:10 in scripture, *“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.”* God is saying, try it out and see if I don't out-give you. He is almost saying, take me for a test drive and you will see that you will never out-give me and as you give, (according to your giving), I will bless you. He is saying that WE are the ones, who often by our lack of generosity, hinder God's ability to bless us.

III. Take care of the Bride First.

Look again at Malachi 3:10, *“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.”*

You also see in this passage the idea of a tithe. God says take 10% of what I give you and place it back in my hands so I can put it back into circulation to make a

difference in the world. Oh, and remember, as you do that, I will bless you. I am not sure where you are in your giving patterns but I believe this is what we are called to do. Could you talk to God about this? Can you move in this direction for His kingdom's sake and from this passage it says for your sake as well?

Now, let me add one more thing to think about that the Lord has been laying on my heart. I think that the average Christian, even if they tithe has missed one very important thing; we are called to bring our tithe to our local church first and then if we want to meet other needs we go above and beyond that tithe.

Some of you have heard the statement, "*A happy wife equals a happy life.*" It is the idea that as a husband, my first obligation (or my first calling) is to care for my wife. Look at the passage in Malachi 3:10 again, where is the tithe supported to go? To the storehouse, this would be the local church. Why because like in my house, I am called to take care of my bride. In this case, we are to care for the Bride of Christ first. And then as she is healthy, she in turn has the ability to give from her full storehouse to meet the needs of those beyond herself.

Biblically we are called to bring our tithe first to the church (Jesus' Bride) and then together, as a church, listening to the directions given by our God we, as Christ's bride, give to meet the needs in Cameroon, at the Seed, Jesus Loves You Society or the Church in Haiti (or other ministries which you will see out in the foyer today,) so God can circulate His finances around the World. Don't miss the fact that, from scripture, we are called to care for the Bride first. And I would add that in times like we are living in now, God calls to us is to join together so that the ministries in, around and beyond this place are cared for. At times this will mean that it will stretch us a little. And like the little boy who had the lunch with 5 small loaves of bread and 2 fish, we may be called to give what is precious to us so that a miracle can happen which will touch many people's lives. If we do that, look at what God promises in I Timothy 6:19. It says that we will have a life that is truly life.

IV. Personal Sacrifice will change you and those around you.

There is one other simple comment that must be made. At times, God will call us as individuals to give beyond our tithe and sacrifice to meet specific needs that God challenges our heart with. Some of you have given financially to specific missions or to care for the marginalized folks at Inn from the Cold, The Seed, HATS or Chain of Love, while others have given hours of your lives volunteering at the Pregnancy Counseling Center, at one of the Hospitals or have gone on a short-term mission to Cameroon, Ireland or Mexico. In each case, it has cost you something; you have had to sacrifice something but again, like I Timothy 6:19 says, you will experience "*life that is truly life*" or as Malachi 3:10 says, you have seen, "*God open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much of his blessing upon you.*" Know that God will take your sacrifice and richly bless you because of it. And because in the midst of the sacrifice you have found that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Interview with Myron Krause, Director at The Mustard Seed

Added Note: Safeguard. I am sure that many of you have seen a documentary or read about TV Evangelists or ministries who raised huge amounts of money for 'so called ministries' only to find that they live in mansions, skim off huge amounts to money as do their relatives who are on their board of directors.

Why does God call us to give first to the local church? It is because you are close enough to be able to find out exactly where the money is going and how it is being spent. All you need to do is attend a church meeting and you will see that we, together as members, decide on how and where money will be spent. Or you can ask our Treasurer and look at our church books anytime. Because of that, you can be assured that when it comes to ministries and missions, you know that no one is taking a piece of the money you sacrificed to give to overhead.

Another Added Note: If you want to give on a regular basis and are like so many of us who find that we forget to bring our checkbook or offering envelope on Sunday or find that when we are away on holidays we wish could give from a distance, know that we have Automatic Withdrawal Offerings, which allows you to have a prescribed withdrawal once or twice a month that goes directly to the church. Also know that if you want to make any changes to this automatic withdrawal, it is very easy and that things can be changed or stopped within just a few days.

To use the Automatic Withdrawal Offerings:

1. Fill in the attached form and drop it off at the Information Desk or the Main Office.
2. Drop by the Main Office or Information Desk and they can give you a form to fill in.
3. Email KariLynn at finance@brentviewbaptist.com and she can send the form to you to fill in.

This option can be done easily and in complete confidence.

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